THROUGH LIFE.

We slight the gifts that every season bears,
And let them fall unheeded from our grasp,
In our great eagerness to reach and clasp
The promised treasure of the coming years;

Or else we mourn some great good passed away,
And in the shadow of our grief shut in,
Refuse the lesser good we yet might win,
The offered peace and gladness of to-day.

So through the chambers of our life we pass,
And leave them one by one, and never stay,
Not knowing how much pleasantness there was
In each, until the closing of the door
Has sounded through the house and died away,
And in our heart we sigh, "For evermore."

A PROUD WOMAN.

John Vandor's sky had always been cloudless. He had seen life through a rose-lined haze, and had walked roughshod over its meadow bloom. Naturally he forgot or never knew that somewhere and sometimes there were sodden paths to tread; that the meadow bloom turned to rustling broomstalks, and the sky to "under-roof of doleful gray." He was sunshiny because he had never peered into the shadows. To have a purse well-filled without knowing who fills it, to open your hand for a gift of fortune and have it drop in carelessly, to win love without seeking it—in short, to play at living is pleasant occupation, but very poor discipline. Perhaps John Vandor was a trifle selfish, in spite of his inexhaustible good nature, his intelligence, his invariable "Good form."

Agnes Earle was the sort of girl men call dashing women—out of respect to their own preferences—dare not classify. She had dark and unreadable eyes, matched to a shade by a profusion of crinkled hair, and set off by long, almost curly lashes—lashes that would have made the Sistine Madonna a half coquette. Her complexion was that rich, deep, yet perfectly clear olive one sees more often in the best Spanish portraits than in American life. From remote ancestors she had perhaps Spanish blood in her veins. In figure she was neither so tall as Diana, nor so mature as Juno; neither lithe or willowy described her exactly, though either may help to indicate the subtle something in her carriage which made her as graceful in movement as in repose, in speech as in silence, in alert attention as in self-saturated reverie. Indeed, Agnes Earle would have been almost beautiful if she had no other charm than the wonderfully pretty hands which had made John Vandor fall half in love with her when they first met, and had helped to persuade him that he loved her ever after.

Vandor was not exactly handsome. He was fine-looking. One could not but admire his physique, and one could not help noticing, in looking him full in the face, that he had brains.

These two began by liking each other somewhat blindly and altogether unreasonably. He liked in her the brilliancy and dash of her style, the suggestive fluency of her small talk, and above all, her compelling beauty. She liked in him a certain strength, a certain suggestion of restrained power, which seemed to underlie his obvious conceit and his superficial empiricism of thinking, and she liked his open-handedness, his big, brave ways, his love of dogs and horses and of "all outdoors."

These young people were second cousins, but they had not met or known much of each other until he was a man of 26 and she a woman of 19. He had come to California for no good reason—for no reason. One Saturday afternoon, after a week of some comprehensive "doing" of San Francisco, he walked into Richard Earle's study at Berkeley, bearing a note of introduction from Cousin Mary, who lived in Albany. He found a bronzed grizzly, curt and gruff man, who scowled him a dubious welcome without rising.

"How long have you been in the state, young man?" asked the host.

"Just ten days—two in Sacramento; eight in San Francisco."

"Are you broke?"

"Do you mean out of funds?" asked the guest, smiling in spite of himself.

"I mean broke—b-r-o-k-e: busted, p'r'aps you say. Come here to borrow?"

"No, thank you. I came to pay my respects, and wish you a very good day." And second cousin Vandor, turning on his heel, quietly left the room.

In the hall he was arrested by the unmistakble rustle of feminine drapery just in time to avoid a collision with a lady.

"I beg your pardon," he said rather stiffly.

"Have you been quarreling with papa?"

The young lady smiled while she asked the question, and all the stiffness had gone from his voice as he replied: "Not exactly; I am a cousin of your father's—of yours too, by the way—and I had come to be very civil to my relative. Your father thought I had come to borrow money."

He had forgotten his anger; forgotten that he ought to have been in full retreat.

"Come back with me, and let me explain. I'll make him apologize. Our cousin must not go away in such a fashion, with the afternoon sun about to go down upon his wrath. I don't wonder you were angry, but then, 'twas only father."

"Your cousin had much rather accept the family apology from you," said Vandor, laughing. "However, I'll go back and try and explain that I'm not 'broke.'"

Agnes led the way, and marche straight to her father's side. She ben and kissed him lightly, and then stand ing directly in front of him, she shook at him one taper finger, saying, with an inimitable drawl, "Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"Why didn't he come here at once, then," snarled the bronzed grizzly.

"Ah, ha! and that's the reason you send our cousin away with your awful bluntness. Now please understand, Da"—she called him "Da"—"that I shall permit no such high-handed acting. Come here, cousin, and notice how meekly he shakes hands."

By this time both men were laughing, and Agnes smiled complacently and left the room. The second cousin masculine shook hands and the elder soon became interested in news from his old home. When Miss Earle reentered the room, an hour later, she saw that the cousins were on the best of terms with each other, and judiciously invited the young man to go out on the porch with her and watch one of their show sunsets. "Judiciously" means that the wise young woman did not intend that the others should have a chance to become bored with each other.

From being a mere looker-on in Vienna, Vandor became enamored of "our glorious climate," and resolved, with the calm, far-seeing discretion of twenty-six, to invest the major portion of his fortune in California securities. Fortunately Richard Earle was a wise mentor. No one knew the ins and outs of San Francisco trade better than he; and Vandor managed to steer clear of Pine street, and locked most of his money into the walls of a big bonded warehouse. From being enamored of our state and our climate, it was easy enough to fall in love with one of our loveliest girls; and before their knowledge of each other had lasted a year, Agnes made herself believe that she loved him well enough to become his wife, and all this with the full consent of gruff Richard Earle.

At a point on the lowest shelf of the Berkely foothills, about midway between the South Hall of the University and the grounds of the State Institute for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind is a covered cistern, in which is gathered the outflow of a dozen mountain springs. This point is the vantage ground of a superb outlook. To the south, the farthest visible horizon is marked by the rounded shoulders of Loma Prieta, ten miles southwest of San Jose. To the north, in the farthest discernible distance, are the low hills between Petaluma and Santa Rosa, a waving line of deepest indigo at the base of the blue sky. There are three evenings in October and three in April, when, looking from Berkely, the sun sets directly behind the Farallones, and against its exaggerated and distorted disk the curious clusters of black rocks stand out like silhouettes.

It lacked less than an hour of sunset when Agnes climbed to the little knoll and stood beside the queer, cone-shaped cistern roof. The fair scape of land and sea and sky unrolled like a scroll from her very feet, west and south and north.

A little path meandered at an upward angle around a southerly curve in the broad hillside. Along this path came a young man, with a dog at his heels and a gun under his arm. It was John Vandor, trudging home from a contraband sally after unlawful wingshots. Agnes did not heed his approach, and he leaned against the fence scarcely a rod away, with the dog at his feet and a cigar in his mouth.

It is idle to try and attain the impossible—to put into accurate thinking and tangible words the lovliness of that evening scene. Looking due south, over the apparently perfectly level of Oakland and Almeda, the southern arm of the bay, which gleams under the morning sun like a narrow silver ribbon that a boy might jump across, was a river of indigo, with scarcely a visible ripple on all its surface. A wall of smoke arose above the houses of the city; its base in gloom, its coping lighted with yellow flame.

"I like it, Agnes; do you?"

Agnes turned at the sound of his voice, and there was a truce of dissatisfied surprise in her tones of welcome.

The young man would have been dull indeed if he had not noticed, and spiritless if he had not been piqued. "You surely don't wish to keep the picture quite to yourself, do you?"

"No, it was the immediate foreground only that I cared to monopolize."

"Cared is past tense, Agnes."

"Care, then."

"'Care then 'isn't grammar."

She looked at him disdainfully for an instant, and then looked another way.

"You will be sorry for this sometime," the young man said, quietly but very gravely. "If I have offended you, let me know how; I'm always ready enough to apologize, am I not?"

"Too ready."

"Too ready?"

"Yes. I am as tired of this interminable scene-making as you can possibly be—this 'kiss and make up' condition of affairs. We are engaged; we have exchanged vows and rings and sophistries—"

"Sophistries?"

"Yes; have we not declared over and over again that we love each other above all else? It is a—an error. Each of us loves his own way better than sweetheart or lover. Is it not so?"

"For you, possibly, not for me."

If she had looked more closely at him as she spoke, she would have noticed that his face wore an expression she had never before seen. John Vandor's forehead carried a frown as black as the shadows of the forest hillsides above San Pablo, and there was the precise sort of glitter in his brown eyes that the usual fictitionist describes as "baleful." But she did not notice; and when he said, slowly and painfully, as if every word cost him a moment of physical pain, "Do you want your freedom back again, Agnes?" she answered him, with the defiant ring of assured proprietorship in her lark-like voice:

"Why, yes, for a while, if you please."

"It shall be until you please to tire of it," was all he said.

He strode down the hillside slope without a single good-by, and she continued to stand with a scornful smile, while the afterglow faded out of the sky. But the smile faded with the waning flush in the western skies, and with the darkness came a sudden dread—a dread she had not known or dreamed of. "Will he ever come back?" she thought. "Will he?" she said aloud. An obtrusive hoot-owl screeched a shrill reply, and the proud girl found it anything but reassuring.

She had been so sure of John Vandor's love, had taken it so for granted, that no daring seemed too great. She had thought it did not greatly matter how courtship fared, since marriage would be master on the morrow. She was prepared to be to her husband all that a wife ought to be; but to abate one jot of her freedom in compliance to her betrothed—that was another matter.

The morrow came and the to-morrow's morrow; but John Vandor did not come with them. One day Agnes went to her father's study. In her eyes were unwonted tears. She told him everything. He waited until she stopped crying; then he said—and though the words were the words of Richard the Bear, the tones of his voice had in them all the tenderness of the father—"It will serve you right if you two never meet again; but you will."

The whistle of the midnight locomotive startled the echoes asleep in the Madera freight house; in the freight house, because there was nothing else in Madera big enough to harbor an echo. First-class passengers sleep aboard trains on the first stage of the Yosemite trip. Richard Earle had been asleep in his section three hours. What to him was the yellow moonlight that shone on an ocean of yellow grain? But for Richard Earle's travelling companion there was no sleep while that moonlight lasted. It was to Agnes a new glamour; and of glamour she had but little in the two years then past. She was a proud girl, and braver than most; but the prolonged and unexplained absence of her lover had been no passing grief. If the world did not suspect,—if even her father did not fully know,—the brown eyes of John Vandor would have winced for his unforgiveness could he have looked into hers for a glance's span. Ill she was not; sad she was not. But in her eyes was a weary look that the world never noticed, and beneath her vigorous health was a nervous, craving unrest that even her father never saw.

When the train drew up to the station, Agnes still sat in her open section, peering with longing eyes into wonderland. Half an hour after the train had settled itself for the night, a tall girl in brown linen and Cruikshank sunshade was walking alone down the track towards Merced, with her feet in the fairy light (and the cinder dust of the uneven road-bed), following the waning moon.

"I wonder if it would be imprudent as well as improper to go to sleep in the wheat, Ruth-like and romantic?"

She spoke aloud, but nothing in the profound stillness answered her. The moon had touched the far horizon, silvering the crests of the west side-hills. Despite herself, the girl was a trifle tired and very sleepy.

"Are these poppies in the wheat?" she asked herself, smiling. "What if I go to sleep for just five minutes, who shall say me nay—or care?"

It was a long five minutes. The first meadow-lark stayed his shrill matins lest he should waken her; and a tall young man on a piebald mare checked his gallop with startled abruptness to see a woman's figure in a linen dress, asleep—or dead—by the supervisor's highway.

The piebald mare stood still, nibbling the milky wheat. The young man approached the recumbent folds of linen, half hidden under the Cruikshank hat. Quite as a matter of course he knelt beside her, and gently pushed back the broad brim of the big hat. The first ray of the rosy morning fell upon the sleeping face. The eyes of the young man opened their widest in recognition. Then the eyes of the young woman opened also, only to close again as she murmured something he could not catch. He bent more near. Surely, it was in a dream she spoke:

"And you have come back to me at last—to hear me say I am sorry."

You ask, Where was her woman's pride, that she gave back her freedom without the asking? That, young gentlemen and misses, is something no one may answer for any one else.

Perhaps Richard the Bear was not so phenomenally cool as he looked when he said to truant and captor an hour later, "Where the deuce have you two been, anyhow?"—*Overland.*

What Gamblers Put Their Money In.

"I'll take this one." The lounger of the St. Louis *Post Dispatch* says that the speaker was a neatly-dressed young man, with a slightly rakish air, and he placed his forefinger on a diamond cluster-pin about an inch in diameter. It was a costly and flashing piece of jewelry. When the purchase had been made the diamond merchant turned to me and remarked: "That was a gambler. That pin will help him in his business, and when he wants to sell it he can make double money on it. It is a good investment. The fact is, diamonds are good investments for anybody, because they always command a fair money value. There is no such thing as a second-hand diamond.

Too Shocking for Anything.

"Isn't it shocking?" she said to George.

"Isn't what shocking, dear?" asked George, tenderly.

"Oh, I just think it is the most shocking thing I ever heard of."

"What is it? Pray tell me what it is that is so shocking," cried George, wild with curiosity.

"Electricity, love."—*Philadelphia Call.*

BLACK BIRCH.

Are there black birch trees agrowing in the far-off woods, I wonder,
With a wealth of balmy essence in their branches lithe and strong?
In the spring-time do the children reach with eager hands to plunder,
While the quiet woodland arches ring with laugh and shout and song.

I can see an old gray schoolhouse with a ledge and wood beside it,
And the rumbled, mossy pasture-land runs close up to its door;
While away back in the greenness, with a tuft of fern to hide it,
And a flash like purest crystal, a spring bubbles and runs o'er.

There's a battered tin-cup hanging on a drooping bough close by it,
Where the sunlight comes in flickers and the shadows gather dim.
Oh, the rush of childish footsteps when at recess time they spy it!
Oh, the flash of cooling water! Oh, the warm lips at its brim!

Then the pulling at the birches, the delightful swish and rustle,
And the crackling of the tender twigs, the noisy bursts of glee;
When the sharp rap on the window calls—oh, what a merry tussle
In the filling-out of pockets so that no sharp eye may see!

The dark room grows strongly cheerful as the little smugglers gather,
And a spicy, woodsy fragrance penetrates its dingy nooks.
Ah, how sly the rodents nibble, while they make a vain endeavor
To appear absorbed in gleaning from the wisdom of their books!

When the daily tasks are ended, and, with dinner-baskets swaying,
All the little folks bound homeward, and the house is left in gloom,
Then across the teacher's weary face a pleasant smile is straying
As she brushes out the litter with her clumsy hemlock broom.

HUMOR OF THE DAY.

Although the lower animals cannot talk, they are nearly all tail-bearers.—*Oil City Blizzard.*

Candor.—Insulted Gentleman: "You are indebted to my cowardice, you young scoundrel, that I don't knock you down."—*Puck.*

There is a man in Pittsburgh so fond of "flash" literature that he won't read anything but a powder magazine.—*Pittsburgh Telegraph.*

Last year England imported over eight hundred million eggs. She not only means to be mistress of the sea, but boss of the hatchway.—*Hartford Post.*

A beautiful maid in Bismarck,
When the lamp was turned down for a spark,
Smuggled up to her Fred,
And tremblingly said,
"I always feel skeered in the dark!"

A Burlington boy sent for a fifty-cent watch, and received a sun-dial. He has named it "Faith," because faith without works is dead.—*Free Press.*

There is a tenement house in New York in which are 110 families. Those living next to the roof boast of their belonging to the upper 110.—*Boston Transcript.*

A scientific writer says the American to-day is not the bilious man of fifty years ago. No! The bilious man of fifty years ago succumbed to the doctors long ere this.—*Boston Post.*

Let us have more cream pie. Could anything be simpler than the following recipe, which we clip from an exchange: "Take cream enough to fill a dish, add eggs and flavor to the taste."

Matthew Arnold was, it is stated, surprised at not being met in New York by Indians. If the Indians had ever read any of his poetry they would have doubtless met him there.—*Arkansaw Traveler.*

Smith (ruffled): "Hello, Jones: I'm glad to see you." Jones, pretending not to recognize Smith for fear he'd tap him for a loan: "My dear sir, you have the advantage of me." "Yes, 'most any one has who possesses ordinary intelligence."—*The Hoosier.*

"Who was that man who just passed?" said Blinks to his friend, with whom he was walking down town. "You mean the one who called me by my first name?" "Yes; rather familiar, I should say." "Oh, that's nothing strange; he's my barber."—*Lowell Citizen.*

"Give me," said the schoolmaster, "a sentence in which the words 'a burning shame' are properly applied." Immediately the bright boy at the head of the class went to the blackboard and wrote: "Satan's treatment of the wicked is a burning shame."—*Philadelphia Chronicle.*

It is very often that you see a young lady turn around to see what a lady friend has on when they pass on the street. But about the only man who takes the trouble to wheel around and look at a fellow pedestrian is the tailor who is anxious to get a glimpse of the creditor who is airing one of his hung-up suits.—*Yonkers Statesman.*

"Gracious, Henry!" exclaimed an Austin lady to her husband, "you didn't drink all that bottle of claret alone, did you?" "Alone, darling!" replied Henry. "Oh, no; I didn't drink it alone. I had just taken two toddies and a rum punch before I tackled the claret. I thought the claret itself might be a little lonesome."—*Texas Siftings.*

Petering Out.

Nevada is said to be gradually "petering out," so to speak. Her population has dwindled to 62,000, which makes her the most thinly inhabited state in the Union; the big residences at Virginia City and Gold Hill, which cost immense sums of money, are being torn down and used for firewood, and the rich deposits of ore, out of which such great fortunes were being made a few years ago, have nearly all been exhausted. The state has no agricultural possibilities, and unless she can find a way to utilize her deposits of salt, sulphur and borax, must soon cease to produce anything worth mentioning.